



Dozens of Commercial Products Made by Prisoners are Show-cased in Springfield



Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI) Chief Executive Officer Jen Aholt and Rich Hampton (right), Southern Region Marketing Manager for ICI are interviewed by Michael Burton of WICS-TV.

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Job training. It's not something you would think exists behind bars. But, today, in Springfield, hundreds of people laid eyes on every-day products, all built by prisoners who have learned a skill and are ready to put it to work.

Close to 900 inmates across Illinois' many correctional facilities are learning a trade, all thanks to an organization called Illinois Correctional Industries.

"Once the offender does release, they're able to walk into a position very well-trained," said chief executive officer, Jen Aholt.

Illinois Correctional Industries, also known as ICI, manufactures products inside correctional centers for the purpose of rehabilitating inmates. After extensive training, the inmates build furniture, street signs, and make apparel. ICI then sells

these goods to other state agencies, schools, and small businesses.

"Eye glasses would be our largest industry," said Aholt. "We make all the eye glasses for Medicaid recipients."

Leaders of ICI say none of their efforts are profit-driven.

"What it is that we make one year is what we are able to re-invest the next year," said Aholt.

Her colleague, Rich Hampton said, "We do not compete with the private-sector. Our job is to train offenders so that when they go back into society they become productive tax-paying citizens. We try to build not only there skill level set, but we also try to build up there esteem."

Many of the inmates in the program are hired right out of prison.

"They are interviewing inmates before they are released," said Aholt.

Marking the beginning of a new life.